



## DEATH DRIVE THROUGH GAIA PARIS

by Charles Noble

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## AFTERWORD

As sympathetic hysteric, granting myself some healthy, off-centre normality, I set about to write an afterword and will henceforth, as per usual, become the pervert. (No, I'm not Irving Layton nor was meant to be, I say – in reference to his prefatorial, Nietzschean certainties!) Therefore I aim to cleave – to the minimum.

The “short hairs,” pseudo haikus, are not in fact traditional haikus. I would call them logopoeic haiku – a contradiction in terms. Logopoeia of course being Ezra Pound's term and of the three possible dominances (the other two of the standard *ménage à trois* being phano- and melopoeia) he claimed logopoeia to be the riskiest – a tending to philosophy and a leaving of poetry. But we're not talking about leaving – there is that ‘-poeia.’ The will to logopoeia, even if just by way of compromising by any amount a genre famous for its proscription of same, also invites Charles Olson's judgment: “all the original thoughts in the world can be written on a postage stamp.” To which I could lamely protest the stamp's rime (Robert Duncan's word) with the haiku. I would also point out that this logopoeia often lives (so lives!) on “psychopoeic” content, a standard literary ecology, where wicked psychic reflexes are portrayed, the ironic distances to be determined in each case – but always minimally there! [?] (A perhaps too pat example of this would be: “she/annoys/anonymously//inside/the/remote/I/short//she/dies”.)

The main attraction to this diverted form indeed is its brevity and its discreteness – owing initially to a completely extra-to-the-form consideration, an ordinary general existential constraint, undisclosed

here, but I may say not unconnected to being discreet (we're talking now of being off the island but still highly visible, yet not – à la “The Purloined Letter”). Complete disclosure: a good many were composed in short periods at my favourite bar. (The other half of the constraint upon this writing was that it was done when my attention was turned mostly to reading.)

At one point I was thinking of entitling the collection “The Minus Hand,” from: “overboard/ musings/ think// haiku/ boat// deck/ hands/ play/ cards// o/ minus/ touch.” And it occurred to me later that the “overboard musings” and “minus touch” were apt descriptions of traditional haiku. This is to say that the genre, while completely valid, has, from the point of view of a minus touch, a logopoeic decision frozen in the genre frame, as well as individual “overboard musings” in the wings of every actual haiku (not to mention the predisposed reader's interpretive flights).

I can't, or at least I refrain from, putting my finger on what language/thought action is spurred into being by the seventeen-syllable constraint – the only hewed-to rule in these hybrid haikus.<sup>2</sup> The intersection of the “imaginary” and the “symbolic” is obviously the central consideration here, referring to the haiku genre level – not to the omnipresent intertwining, however hidden, in any language action, even of course in strict (haiku) phanopeic language, and which can always be teased out again and explored or experimented with in many directions and to extreme degrees, even to, in reverse, cutting it all back to melopoeia, to one of the “materialit[ies]” of language, all of it to a *pharmakon* moment of apoetics uncannily taken up by re-recognized/re-cognizing literary process and thereby stutter-doubled into proto-genre, *set off* (a möbius and

deist-like pun) by on-board musings as twined and twinned to overboard.

Whether this intersection makes haiku [re]olutions harder or easier, or harder in a different way, is open to question. What is not open to question is that whatever the logo-/phano-/melo- mix, with whatever parts repressed or not, or whatever the abstract real<sup>3</sup> (in Hegel's sense of abstract – splintered-off), marks or sounds, imaginary space circles back into and as, dare I say it, the picture which begs the picture, which fundamentally finesses the empirical irresolution at the threshold of the “mind” (the “airy nothing” that rimes with our reports *and* projected sense of irresolute and quirky quarks stringing us along, *i.e.*, alluding to those arch-deceivers *just because* real puppeteers, the answer to a corrupted puppet, that is the question) – leading even, perchance, to the phenomenon of the phenomenon in the phenomenon, *i.e.*, to aesthetic or metaphysical shine, which retrieves, another circle, the traditional phanopoeic haiku (its phano-fanning possibilities) we set out to depart from.<sup>4</sup>

Putting the discrete haiku into an order up-sets<sup>5</sup> the discreteness, what with segues, oppositions, resonances, and progressions within the progression. Also over the course of the sequence the indexico-iconic extras (Peircean combos – of course made through symbols/signifiers, or minus-touch semeiosis) reach enough of a critical mass to insert some minute *local* into the *logo [minus]* – thus ducking some Olson's implied injunction. (Re here the belying “Paris” haiku and title, see belying “Toronto” haiku [“too/ big/ for/ my/ whereabouts”].) A motivated sequence opens all the discrete closures (though not from certain perspectives or in certain cases closed anyway) – as it were, puts

an end to the at-wit's-end these turned haiku have been turned to. One could even say these catachretic little Cretans/cretins (befuddled and B.-Russelled<sup>6</sup>), as secreted through the backdoor, go archipelago longpoem, *i.e.*, intimations of such – not in the sense of narrative or architectonics, but in the sense of serial, and yet there are some arcs (and barks). Gazes of course wander through the poems like ghosts, which congeal, from “time to time,” zoom-lens syntaxes, extra to, or intra in, or coincident with, the poems.

## NOTES

- 1 The second and third stanzas are taken/adapted from *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan* (Book III, I think).
- 2 The one word per line, with no punctuation marks, is not meant to produce any staccato effect. The reader is invited to participate in the phrasing as suggested by the idioms and the enjambments, with their senses carried over, so to sometimes pick up new sense in a larger completion, and to sometimes split apart what is about to pick up from what would be picked up – *i.e.*, either to “up-set” or to upset. Senses then arise and override, with micro-rhythms, any merely spiky effects, which would, ironically enough, have a leveling effect. Stanza breaks are the only punctuation marks and help facilitate the phrasing.
- 3 Footnote 15 in the afterword of the forthcoming *Sally O* gives a specific spur for this note on how Lacan’s “real” can never be obsolesced by the world of copies or by the virtual – the virtual being “at one” with his “reality” which is overall in contradistinction to the real, though indistinct from it at any one point, also [all so] hidden outright in “the drag [or dress or gauze or gaze] of knowing,” so of course, in the world of copies, confusing, because confused. Analyzing [loosening back] a bit, the complications pile up, to use an extra-alienated or mechanical metaphor [mitigated by a second sense, *i.e.*, “crash”]: reality [to go with Lacan] broken into more intimately reveals a structure that includes the symbolic, the imaginary *and* the real, where the real is revealed, intimately, as “extimate,” in-itself and as mode for the others, which also lend themselves back, in turn, as modes, which hints at the dynamic and dialectical relations going missing in this listing, this pile about to topple – into weird topologies. It all adds up to not adding up – if the negative has its say, in its self-relating way: it’s not “life is an illusion” but “illusion is life.” Truth escapes us so it can, as outside chance and a real rule, interrupt all realities as they would settle for relativism, or fall to the low-level question-begging in “he wins because he wins,” that capitulation to an extimate of blind power, rather than the truth that would have it both ways, *i.e.*, would determine the choicest reality, where the extimate becomes the only consummation of reality’s intimate turning – to recapitulate and re[-]fuse itself, which is certainly its most endearing, oh sorry, I mean enduring, quality, if you won’t think it too ironic. The genius of the negative, as Kenneth Burke

said, of Bartelby, as applied by Slavoj Žižek, and as Hegel would “tarry” with, and on which he would move, on – in his inimitable no-no way. *This enunciation is brought to you by the nearest thing to the greatest of all, I, O great escape clause, greatest deal ever, sheer contraction, end of endless subcontracts, nothing but I, i.e., nothing butting nothing. But that’s not all – there’s also nothing butting all, which is then so always overcome by all its shortcomings, and things that dance in and out of themselves, that can’t quit being placed, nor quite be so.*

- 4 Two points: a) These haikus are, *properly speaking*, more dialectical than “phenomenological.” b) The *death drive*, in a sense [*in sense*], runs on its own steam and so, like boxers’ shorts and the afterlife, is everlasting, a bid for *more than [life]*, as buried in *more [life]*, ironically supported by life, biological life, for a while. In Deleuze’s *The Logic of Sense* he says the death drive is dramatized in Zola’s novels as “the crack in the universe.” The absolute then clutches itself (think “drive train”) through this crack, and one could say, contrary to Russell, becomes a member of itself, terms that Hegel, though in agreement, would call “[dirty] picture thinking” (see forthcoming *Sally O* appendix for how a certain breast haiku’s point is not “the leering” but a point of departure, a dramatization of how the death drive exhausts all the other drives and then folds into a field of love and “such like”).
- 5 I would like to thank the (anonymous to me) reader for the University of Calgary Press who suggested I think about his/her idea for a new, five-category order and then making formal section breaks. I had fun doing this, the categories always to some degree undecideable (some poems participating in all five), and fun coming up with section titles. Lots of the local “runs” or progressions carried over and the new order of course still “up-sets” the discreteness.
- 6 See “Russell’s paradox.”



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In his latest collection of poetry, Charles Noble further reins in an already tight form – haiku – only to let loose a “logopoeic” poetry. He presents poems of extraordinary rigour and riddles of wit that are solved by “lifetime” insights – a dialectical poetry that still observes a phenomenological toehold but transcends the limits of locality in recognizing the curled-up-but-everywhere world of media and markets – *à la* Fredric Jameson. And yet, these “haikus” go straight – to “the shock of the naïve.” They turn to a middle ground, in Aristotle’s sense of difficult target. They point to human acts, human reactions, and enact, themselves, a meta-linguistic wrestling, at one with the quarrelling couple in the bar hanging on each other’s words and insistent with “what do you mean by [a simple word]?” But they are also implicated in what he calls the death drive (not death wish), which arcs freely over a human life span – think architecture – and which, more radically, in the “*pleated/ crossword*”, “make[s]/ good// a/ bit/ of/ bad/ infinity”, no expenses, save for that toehold, earth, as he would have it.

Charles Noble was born in Lethbridge and raised in Nobleford. He earned his BA in English and Philosophy from the University of Alberta, and is the winner of the Writers’ Guild of Alberta Poetry Award (1996). Charles now divides his time between Banff and Nobleford, where he farms with his brother, Bryan, and his family.

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